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A Red Crossbill Invasion

Probably the outstanding bird event in the Bay Region during late 1947 and early 1948 was the occurrence of Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) in many localities. The increase in bird conscious persons undoubtedly accounts for the large number of reports that have come to hand. Because of this interest it seemed desirable to gather together present data for this season and also review some past observations.

Mrs. Vee K. Curtis, 11000 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, was the first person to call my attention to the species this fall. On Nov. 8 she saw two at her bird bath. On the same day George T. Kilham found a female trapped in fresh oil on the road near Summit Meadows, Tamalpais Park, Marin Co. On Nov. 29 a female was found dead at 6112 Ascot Dr., Oakland where it had killed itself flying against a window. On Dec. 4 another female was found dead in the same neighborhood. Both of these birds are now specimens in the Vertebrate Zoology Museum at Berkeley and have been identified as belonging to the race *grinnelli*. It is impossible to identify subspecies in the field.

The birds reported were usually seen perched on or feeding in Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata*), occasionally coming down to the ground and to bird baths, or flying overhead. They go about in flocks often calling Kimp, Kimp, etc., as they fly thus making it easy to detect their presence. There were the following exceptions. Donald Brock saw six perched on a telephone wire, Castro Valley; Miss Peymell found nine in an *Araucaria excelsa* in Sutro Gardens, these flew down to a pool for a drink; Mrs. Curtis reported nine in a *Casuarina*; Laidlaw Williams on one occasion saw them in a planted Monterey Cypress; another reported them in a leafless birch close to a window. In the case of the cypress Mr. Williams saw them working among the cones but could not see if they were successful in obtaining food. They are erratic in their movements often staying but a day or two in a particular group of pines and then leaving the neighborhood. This made it difficult for anxious bird observers to find them when having been given a specific address.

Mrs. James Irving (Miss Crowe) looked over the crossbill specimens in the collection of the California Academy of Sciences and kindly furnished the following data. Race *sitkensis* was taken in Hayward Jan. 1899, Feb. and April 1914; in San Geronimo Oct. 1878 and Bear Valley April 1884 (both these stations are in Marin Co.). Race *grinnelli* was taken Mar. 1895 in Nicasio, Marin Co. and in Dec. 1919 in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Race *stricklandi* was taken Jan. 1897 and again Mar. 1920 in Pacific Grove.

On a field trip taken by our association Feb. 15, 1920 in Golden Gate Park crossbills were observed. (Recorded in *The Gull*, Vol. 2 No. 3.) Gordon Bolander reported them from Pt. Reyes Station, Marin Co. Jan. 2, 1936 (Recorded in *The Gull*, Vol. 18, No. 6.) Mr. Williams states that the last season in which they have had a Crossbill invasion in Monterey previous to the 1947-48 one was in 1938-39. At that time he noticed them up until June 14, 1939. Mrs. Curtis reported a female on her feeding tray May 12, 1947. On April 19, 1948 Mr. Williams saw one individual with a twig in its bill, a female posturing, and one bird sang a low soft reiterated song.

I wish to thank those persons who supplied me with data and will welcome reports of birds still present. For further records see Pacific Coast Avifauna numbers 11-18-27.

Summary of Places and Dates for 1947-48 Red Crossbills

MARIN COUNTY

Nov. 8, Mt. Tamalpais, G. T. Kilham.

Jan. 17, Rock Sprngs, near Mountain Theatre, Mt. Tamalpais, Dr. Robert T. Orr.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Nov. 8, 11, 13, 11000 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, Mrs. Vee Curtis.

Nov. 19, Blackford Cr., Oakland, Mrs. M. Zimmerman. At this address birds were seen almost daily in flocks from 10 to 20 individuals through November. On Nov. 30 a flock of about 60 flew over. None was seen after Mar. 10 until April 3 when two birds stopped in a pine. This is the last date for this address.

Nov. 30 and Dec. 2, Boy Scout Camp, Oakland, Brighton C. Cain.

Dec. 26, Castro Valley, Donald Brock.

June 3, one bird flew over Berkeley Campus, Joe Marshall.

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

Dec. 10, Twelve birds Harding Golf Course, Lake Merced, Junea W. Kelly.

Feb. 18-21-28, Chain of Lakes, Golden Gate Park, Junea W. Kelly.

Feb. 26, Nine birds Sutro Heights, San Francisco, Florence Plymell.

During March, April and up to May 12, flocks of from 25 to 40 birds

During March, April and up to May 12, flocks of from 25 to 40 birds were heard or seen daily flying over or near the Academy buildings.

A flock seemed to stay in the area between Stow Lake and the Quarry, Golden Gate Park. Dr. Robert T. Orr.

MONTEREY COUNTY

Nov. 2, Monterey, first seen by Laidlaw Williams.

May 7-8-9, Asilomar, during Cooper Club annual meeting.

June 11, Carmel, flock of 21, last seen by Laidlaw Williams.

May 27-28-29, Six birds were seen at Pacific Grove by Dr. Frank Pitelka.

June 10, Fourteen birds seen at Rancho Aguajito in the Monterey area by Dr. and Mrs. W. A. Angwin.

—Junea W. Kelly, June 17, 1948.

JUNE FIELD TRIP

For years many of the June Field trips of the Audubon Association of the Pacific have been taken to the territory of the Marin Municipal Water District, walking in from Ross.

The June trip this year was taken on Sunday, the 13th, starting from Ross and following Lagunitas Road to Phoenix Lake Park. Some birded longer in gardens, some took a turn to the left at the church and followed through to Woodside Way, returning to Lagunitas Road. Passing Phoenix Lake we followed the beautiful road which gradually winds up and around to Bon Tempe meadow, then through the meadow to the Lake Lagunitas picnic grounds, then down the Fish Grade Road to Phoenix Lake again. A small group went to Lake Lagunitas, but saw no birds.

In 1929 Charles Bryant wrote of this trip: "The associations along the route are streams with dense thickets of shrubbery along the banks, lake shores, wooded roads and open meadows." It is still the same. But Bon Tempe meadow will soon be no more.

One of the interesting features of this trip was that it is the last scheduled trip for this territory before the new Bon Tempe Dam goes in. When completed Nov. 15, Bon Tempe will be the second of the "chain of lakes".

All of this should change the birding life of the district over the years and is recorded here for the interest of those distant members who have birded this territory many times in the past. "Marin is growing like a house afire" and that, too, will cause many changes in our bird life eventually. But as there is a total of 14,000 acres in this watershed and all "protected" territory, it at least will always be wild.

Nesting birds were found at once in the California Woodpecker feeding young in nest at the top of the telephone pole at the west end of the Ross Bridge, Chickadees feeding young out of the nest. An Ash-Throated Flycatcher, feeding young in nest in the end of an iron pipe at the home of the caretaker at the Phoenix Dam, made us wonder how the little birds could stand the heat.

Western Flycatcher's nest under the bridge just inside the park completed the nesting records tho undoubtedly a Russet-backed Thrush was feeding young near the school house.

The old post where Bluebirds nested in years past was unoccupied and may be accounted for by the fact that the planted pines were encroaching, making it not to a bluebirds' liking. The caretaker told me that location will be under water when the dam is finished.

Twenty-three Turkey Vultures were soaring over the area where the top soil had been moved by tractors. The caretaker told us it was fish that brought them. I asked about rodents, etc. and he said "yes them too".

Since we must have Cowbirds — sometimes — we were glad this one was perched atop the tree on Ross Common, facing us in full sun, so that the marks of the male, the sharply defined chestnut-brown head and neck, were easily distinguishable.

The following 43 species were observed:

Anth.-Green Heron	Violet-green Swallow	Yellow Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Barn Swallow	Meadowlark
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cliff Swallow	Bullock Oriole
Red-tailed Hawk	Steller's Jay	Cowbird
Killdeer	California Jay	Bl.-headed Grosbeak
Mourning Dove	Crow	Cal. Purple Finch
Anna Hummingbird	Chestnut-bk. Chickadee	House Finch
Allen Hummingbird	Plain Titmouse	Goldfinch
Belted Kingfisher	Bush-tit	Spotted Towhee
Cal. Woodpecker	Wren-tit	Brown Towhee
Downy Woodpecker	Robin	Oregon Junco
Ash-thr. Flycatcher	Russet-bk Thrush	Chipping Sparrow
Black Phoebe	Cassin's Vireo	Song Sparrow
Western Flycatcher	Warbling Vireo	
Olive-sd. Flycatcher	Lutescent Warbler	

About 30 members and guests enjoyed this trip.

—Anna Margaret Smith (Mrs. Otis H.) *Leader and Historian*.

CORRECTION: In June "GULL"; "Exchange Publications". "The following articles of interest, etc. In Audubon Magazine of Jan.-Feb.", should read *March-April*.

July Field Trip

The July field trip will be held Sunday, July 11th. Since last year's trip was so successful, the party will again meet at Point Lobos Ave. and Camino Del Mar, San Francisco at 7:00 in the morning.

The territory to be explored will be the Veterans Facility near Fort Miley, Lincoln Park, Land's End, Sutro Heights, and the Seal Rocks. Take the Sutter Street bus. Bring your friends and binoculars. Leader, Arthur H. Myer.

July Meeting

The 370th meeting of the Audubon Association of the Pacific will be held July 8, at 7:30 p. m. in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Sts., San Francisco. After the business meeting, the evening will be devoted to field notes by members. Come prepared to share your interesting out-door experiences with other enthusiasts. Bring your friends.

Laurel Reynolds,
Program Chairman.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p. m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Sts., San Francisco
Alternate months — Oakland.

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